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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL CONSIDERATION AND PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL CONSIDERATION AND PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction**: In 2000 the United Nations member states ratified and committed themselves to achieving the eight millennium development goals. The most salient of the goals is number three that sought to promote gender equality and empower women. Despite the new constitution and other affirmative measures that have been undertaken by the Government of Kenya, there is still low representation of women in leadership in Kenya.

**Purpose:** The study sought to determine the relationship between political consideration and proportion of women in top leadership positions in Kenya. The justification was driven by the realization that despite the affirmative action measures and the promulgation of the new Kenyan constitution which prohibits either gender from constituting more than two-thirds of any elected body, there has not been much progress in increasing the number of women in leadership positions.

**Research methodology:** The thesis used the mixed method methodology (qualitative and quantitative). The study design was cross a sectional study and the data was collected using structure questionnaires, with closed ended questions for quantitative data and open ended questions for qualitative data. 221 senior managers in state corporations were sampled using stratified sampling technique. The questionnaires were self-administered.

**Results:** The findings of this study suggest that there was a significant relationship between political considerations and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions in state corporations in Kenya.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** The thesis makes an important contribution in understanding the important role of political consideration Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions.

**Keywords**: *political consideration, leadership, proportion of women, state corporations*

## INTRODUCTION
## Background and research gap

The other measure that has been put in place by the government of Kenya in an effort to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the public sector concerns affirmative action policies. Wanyande (2003) describes affirmative action as policies that seek to bring about equity in distribution of people and opportunities, such as, in education systems, political systems, and in

work places. The Kenyan government has adopted affirmative action policies that specifically apply to women. A collaborative effort of women and women's organizations in Kenya produced a bill, in parliament which came to be known as the Constitution of Kenya, Amendment Bill, of 2000. The bill sought to provide an affirmative action program which would ensure increased women's.

In addition to specific government policies seeking to ensure greater equality for women within Kenya, there are several non-governmental organizations formed to empower women and girls, at the grassroots level, in social, economic and political ways. FIDA Kenya is one such organization, formed in 1985 to improve the legal status of women, improve access to justice for women, advocate for reform of laws and policies with regard to women's rights, and enhance public awareness on gender and women's rights in Kenya. Another organization that is concerned with women issues in Kenya, is the Caucus for Women's Leadership, which is a legally registered national network dedicated to building women's leadership in Kenya. The caucus works with all women, irrespective of their cultural, religious, political, or socio-economic backgrounds, by establishing structures at the grassroots that act as platforms where women can build their leadership skills. The organization has established female regional assemblies as a model of ensuring women's participation in leadership at all levels of decision-making.

According to the millennium development goals, status report for Kenya 2008, glaring gender gaps exist in access to and control of resources, economic opportunities, power, and political voice. Though women constitute slightly over half of the population of Kenya, women continue to have less access to social services, and productive resources than men. The status report goes on to assert that women have been disempowered at the household, community and national levels, and face discrimination on the basis of cultural practices, and laws that discriminate against them. They are under-represented in social, economic and political leadership, and their capabilities have not been developed to full potential due to limited access to capital, marketing, information, education, training and healthcare.

Literature on gender, indicate that there never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers. This statement was made in reference to the political role of women in the United States during the 19th century and applies to the political role of women in countries around the world today, including Kenya. Women constitute over 50 percent of Kenya's population, but the majority of them are illiterate and poor. Women in Kenya face economic, social and political barriers that hinder them from progressing to leadership positions (Cutura 2010).

## Statement of the Problem

The lack of significant proportions of women in leadership and senior management positions in almost every organization, irrespective of whether in the commercial, industrial, military or public sector appears to be a worldwide phenomenon (Heslop 1994).

According to the Ministry of Education reports of 2009, women's enrolment in public universities is over 40 percent. Affirmative action measures have also been put in place to increase the number of women enrolling in technical courses that are considered relevant to the job market, and yet this percentage is not reflected in employment situation in either, the public or the private sector (Government of Kenya 2009). Even though studies show that women have gained increased access to middle level management positions, research indicates that leadership still remains a male prerogative, as female leaders and top executives continue to be a rarity (Pheko 2009). It is on this basis that the study sought to establish the relationship between employees' beliefs relating to political considerations and the low representation of women in high leadership positions in State Corporations in Kenya.

## Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between political considerations and proportion of women in top leadership positions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Synergistic Leadership Theory (STL)

The effective practices highlighted above further demonstrate that women should be themselves and should not feel the pressure to conform to patriarchal practices in order to move forward. Women's practices of inclusion, collaboration, valuing others and their contributions, and the ability to balance work and family are helpful in breaking barriers to gender equity in educational leadership. In any case, Irby, Brown, Duffy, and Tautman (2002) affirmed, that even though such practices are widely advocated, they are not incorporated in common leadership theories. Synergistic leadership theory (SLT), however, "openly acknowledges the feminine organization as a major component," which lacks in other leadership theories (Irby *et al*. 2002 p. 315).

### Empirical Review

Organizational politics refers to the complex mixture of power, influence, and interest-seeking behaviours that dominate individuals' activity in the workplace. Whenever people interact in the workplace, some degree of politics must develop (Marques 2010). Gotsis and Kortezi (2011) explored the self-interested nature of organizational politics, and noted that politics leads to constraints that make trust formation, networking and reciprocities operative in environments effectively embedding political behavior in organizations.

Even though politics is part and parcel of organizational experience, the level and intensity of politics differ from one organization to another. Where there is intense political environment, it

affects employee performance appraisals, working atmosphere, reputation and image of the organization in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders (Salimaki and Jamsen 2010).

Poon (2002), in his study of Malaysian employees, found that job ambiguity, scarcity of resources, and trust climate contributed to how organizational politics is perceived. Perceptions of organizational politics in turn contributed to job stress, satisfaction and turnover. Those employees who felt high levels of politics were reported to have high levels of stress, lower levels of job satisfaction, and higher chances of quitting employment altogether. Organizational politics is a reality of organizational life.

Karatepe 2012). Swan (2010) argues that the workplace is understood as the outcomes of social practices, reproduced through workplace structures, discourses, cultures, practices, policies, interactions and procedures. Workplace actions, cultures, practices, ways of organizing and events can be seen and understood as having a gender perspective. These include the way that jobs pay, hierarchies and power are patterned by gender, and images, language and symbols are applied which reinforce or justify gender divisions.

Globally, the basic constraints women face as they attempt to participate in politics, though occurring in varying magnitudes in different countries, tend to be broadly similar. It has been argued that Kenya has some unique aspects that continue to keep the numbers of women in politics low, such as lack of an affirmative action law, and the gender insensitive male political culture, which continues to dominate key social and political institutions (Kamau 2010). According to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, Kenya needs to acquire political will among its top leaders to make it easier for women's participation in decision-making in the organizations (Government of Kenya 2011).

*$H_1$: There is a significant relationship between political consideration and proportion of women in top leadership positions.*

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the purpose of the study and the philosophical orientation adopted, the research design employed was a survey of state corporations in Kenya. The chosen design was able to offer the researcher the opportunity to establish the relationship between political considerations and proportion of women in top leadership positions. This was a census study of all State Corporations in Kenya. There were eighty four (84) state corporations in Kenya, according to the official government website as at December, 2009. Fifty of the State Corporations were classified as large corporations (more than three hundred employees), while thirty four were small corporations (less than three hundred employees), as defined by the State Corporations Act (Government of Kenya 2009). The main focus was on top management of the Corporations, and the study respondents were senior management level staff that included chief executive officers.

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Primary data was used in the study. Primary data was collected on the respondent's general information as well as the variable under consideration. Simple random sampling method was used to select the respondents. Such a method of identifying respondents for study has been used in the previous researches with little bias reported (Sekeran 2003).

To establish the nature and magnitude of the relationships between the variables and to test the hypothesized relationships, the researcher used inferential statistics. The appropriate tests applied were Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient Correlation (r) and bivariate regression. The relationship between political considerations and proportion of women in top leadership positions was investigated by testing $H_1$.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Objective of the study sought to determine the relationship between political considerations and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions

### $H_1$: *There is a relationship between political considerations and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions*

Political Considerations was measured by variables which included; I feel that i was discriminated against in promotion because of my gender, I think women have fewer opportunities for professional development than what i wish, I think men receive more organizational support and trust than women, I think i need more support than what i am currently receiving to manage my double and If i experience difficulty at work, i have somebody or somewhere to resort to. Data was obtained using a Likert type scale of 1-5 where 1= not at all, 2 = rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often and 5= very often. Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions focused on the number of women on top leadership positions visa vie the number of their male counterparts. Proportion was measured using the ratio scale.

### Correlation Results for political considerations and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistic was used to test the relationship between Political Considerations and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions. The results in Table 1 below indicates a statistically significant relationship between political considerations and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions (r = .444, p= 0.001).

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**Table 1: Correlation Matrix**

| Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| . | Pearson Correlation | 1.000 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | |
| Political considerations | Pearson Correlation | .444* | 1.000 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.001 | |

**Regression results for political considerations and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions.**

The R value was 0.004 indicating that there is a very weak positive relationship between Political consideration and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions. The R squared ($R^2$) value of .0016 explains indicates that 0.16 percent of the variation in the Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions can be explained by Political consideration leaving 99.84 percent unexplained.

**Table 2: Model fitness**

| Indicator | Coefficient |
|---|---|
| R | 0.004 |
| R Square | 0.0016 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.0014 |
| Std. Error of the Estimate | 0.70971 |

Table 3 provides the results on the analysis of the variance (ANOVA). The results indicate that the overall model was statistically significant. Further, the results imply that the independent variables are good predictors of Women in Top Leadership Positions. This was supported by an F statistic of 3.738 and the reported p value (0.021) which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05 significance level.

**Table 3: Analysis of Variance**

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 3.072 | 3 | 1.024 | 3.738 | **0.021** |
| Residual | 27.673 | 47 | .589 | | |
| Total | 30.745 | 50 | | | |

Political consideration had a β value of 0.379 at p = 0.021.

**Table 4: Regression of Coefficients**

| Variable | B | Std. Error | t | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 1.534 | 0.639 | 2.400 | .020 |
| Political considerations | 0.379 | 0.244 | 2.553 | **0.021** |

## CONCLUSION

This study used top level leaders to point to the causes of low female representation in top-level leadership in state corporations. The general objective of the study was to determine the relationship between political consideration, and proportion of women in top leadership positions. The study established that political consideration had an influence on the proportion of women in top leadership positions.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCHER

The thesis makes an important contribution in understanding the factors influencing proportion of women in top leadership positions in state corporations in Kenya. Arising from this study, the researcher makes the following suggestions for further research.

 Use of other data collection methods such as interviews would help the researchers get responses that are relatively free from bias. This is because interviews afford the researcher the opportunity to allay fears, anxieties and concerns that the respondents may have. The researcher may also offer clarification when needed and help respondents to think through difficult issues. Use of focus groups sessions aimed at obtaining respondents true opinions and experiences would also help get genuine ideas and feelings about the topic under discussion.
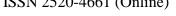
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